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WEINBERGER LINKS SYRIA TO BOMBING

He Says Damascus Sponsored Iranians in Beirut Attack

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 22 — Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger said today that it was Iranians who exploded the truck bomb in the Marine compound at the Beirut airport a month ago, with the "sponsorship and knowledge and authority of the Syrian Government."

Mr. Weinberger, who spoke in a news conference, did not disclose the source of his information but pointed a finger directly at the Syrian Government in what appeared to be the strongest public accusation by the Administration on who was responsible for the attack in which 239 Americans died on Oct. 23. But Mr. Weinberger declined, in response to a question, to call it an act of war.

The Defense Secretary said the evidence of the Iranian and Syrian connection "is an accumulation of a number of reports in which we have considerable confidence."

He brushed off questions of reprisals, saying President Reagan had not made "any promise of retaliation."

On Oct. 24, the day after the bombing, Mr. Reagan said, "This despicable act will not go unpunished." In a televised speech three days later, he said, "Those who directed this atrocity must be dealt justice, and they will be."

The Deputy Secretary of State, Ken-

neth W. Dam, said on Oct. 30 that "retaliation comes in many shapes and sizes, and we are looking at all of the options." More recently, however, Secretary of State George P. Shultz said public talk of retaliation should cease.

Won't Discount Nicaragua Attack

On other matters today, the Defense Secretary left open the possibility that the United States would use military force against the leftist Government of Nicaragua. But he insisted that American combat troops would not be sent to El Salvador despite a deterioration in the military situation there.

He said relations with the Soviet Union "are not good" for many reasons.

"I don't think they're irretrievable," he said, "but I think that it will require a substantial alteration in Soviet behavior."

Mr. Weinberger appeared to soften his insistence that the Reagan Administration submit to Congress a 1985 military budget that would be 20 percent higher than the present budget. The new budget is due to go to Congress in January.

Mr. Weinberger further asserted that lower rates of Soviet military investment reported by the Central Intelligence and Defense Intelligence Agencies should not slow down United States efforts to expand military forces.